amnesty international

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MERD/IM/HH

Mr Salem Azzam
Secretary General
Islamic Council
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5 June 1987

Dear Mr Azzam

It was a great pleasure to welcome you at our International Secretariat on 21 May and to have had the opportunity to express my appreciation of the activities of the Islamic Council in the human rights arena and its cooperation with Amnesty International.

Thank you also for your letters of 21 May, one regarding the mass arrests in Egypt following the attempt on the life of the former Minister of Interior, Hassan Abu Basha, and the others on the trial in Tunisia, due to open on 1 July, of Rachid Ghannouchi and other prominent members or supporters of the Mouvement de la Tendence Islamique (MTI).

Amnesty International has communicated its concern to the Egyptian Government that state of emergency legislation continues to be used not only to imprison those involved in acts of violence but also to arrest and detain individuals for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs. Amnesty International has called for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and has sought assurances that all other political detainees are being permitted access to lawyers of their own choice and are being humanely treated. As usual, we are grateful for any additional information you are able to provide on individual cases and greatly appreciate your cooperation in referring visiting Egyptian lawyers and prominent personalities to us.

With regard to the arrests of MTI members or supporters which began in March 1987 with the arrest of the President of the MTI, Rachid Ghannouchi, Amnesty International members have sent urgent appeals to the Tunisian authorities seeking clarification of the reasons for the arrests and of the present legal situation of the detainees. Amnesty International was particularly concerned that they continued to be held incommunicado, with no right of access to families and defence lawyers, and about reports that some were tortured during interrogation to extract confessions and other information. The organization was also concerned that some of the detainees were reported to be in a poor state of health, following torture, and not receiving medical treatment.

Amnesty International is at present considering sending a trial observer to the session which begins on 1 July and would appreciate any further information you may be able to provide on the detainees and the

trial. We will, of course, keep you informed of our plans and will contact you nearer the time for details of the observer whom the Islamic Council is sending from the Federal Republic of Germany.

During our meeting you kindly offered to send us a copy of the report on the Islamic Penal Code of September 1983 (part in English and part in Arabic), submitted by the group of Muslim experts to Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi of Sudan. I would like to express once again our appreciation of the offer and our interest in receiving the report.

We also discussed Amnesty International's desire to extend and develop its relations with regional inter-governmental organizations such as the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and are grateful for any advice or help you may be able to provide in this area.

Yours sincerely

Ian Martin
Secretary General